

REMARKS

Claims 1-76 are pending in the present application.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 25, 30, 60, 61, and 68 as having informalities requiring correction.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 7, 16-19, 22-24, 26-29, 33-34, 26-42, 44, 53-55, 57-59, 61-64, 68-69, and 71-76 under 35 U.S.C. 102 as being anticipated by Tharalson et. al. U.S. Pat. No. 6,148,456.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 21, 32, 56 and 57 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tharalson et. al. U.S. Patent No. 6,148,456 in view of Tharalson et. al. U.S. Patent No. 5,845,349.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 25 and 60 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tharalson et. al. U.S. Patent No. 6,148,456 in view of Huang U.S. Patent No. 5,711,040.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 6, 8-15, 20, 30, 31, 35, 43, 45-52, 65, 66, and 70 as depending from rejected base claims, but indicated that the claims would be otherwise allowable.

Applicant hereby responds to the Examiner's objections and rejections as described below.

A. Cancellation of Claims

In view of the Examiner's indication of the allowability of claims 6, 8-15, 20, 30, 31, 35, 43, 45-52, 65, 66, and 70, Applicant has herein cancelled the remaining claims to allow these claims indicated as allowable to issue in as timely a process as possible. Applicant reserves the right to refile and continue prosecution of the claims cancelled herein.

In particular, claims 6, 8, 20, 30, 35, 43, 45, 65, and 70 have been rewritten in independent form, incorporating each of the limitations of the claims from which the amended claims previously depended, and accordingly the claims are believed to be in condition for allowance.

With regard to claims 9-15, 31, 46-52, and 66, these claims depend from the newly amended into independent form claims, and are accordingly believed to be in allowable condition as they depend from allowable claims.

B. Objections as to Form

In the present Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 25, 30, 60, 61, and 68 as having informalities requiring correction. Claims 25, 60, 61, and 68 have been herein cancelled, and accordingly the informalities are not believed to require correction at the present time.

The asserted informality with regard to claim 30 was in the identification of the dependency of this claim. In particular, although the claim depended from claim 28, the claim provided further limitations to an element introduced in claim 29. Claim 30 has been rewritten in independent form pursuant to the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, with the limitations of claim 29 incorporated therein, and accordingly Applicant believes this claim to be presently in condition for allowance.

C. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

In the present Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 7, 16-19, 22-24, 26-29, 33-34, 26-42, 44, 53-55, 57-59, 61-64, 68-69, and 71-76 under 35 U.S.C. 102 as being anticipated by Tharalson '456. Without conceding to the characterization, Applicant has herein cancelled the identified claims.

D. Rejection of Claims 21, 32, 56 and 57 Under 35 U.S.C. §103

In the present Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 21, 32, 56 and 57 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tharalson '456 in view of Tharalson '349. Without conceding to the characterization, Applicant has herein cancelled the identified claims.

E. Rejection of Claims 25 and 60 Under 35 U.S.C. §103

In the present Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 25 and 60 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tharalson '456 in view of Tharalson '349. Without conceding to the characterization, Applicant has herein cancelled the identified claims.

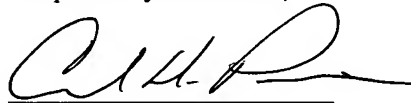
F. Fees

Inasmuch as the number of independent claims in the present application has increased, Applicant herewith submits a check in satisfaction of the outstanding additional claim fees. In particular, the application as originally filed contained 2 independent claims, and 76 total claims, for which fees were paid accordingly. As amended, the present application includes 9 independent claims, and 25 dependant claims, resulting in 6 independent claims in excess of the 3 included in the base filing fee. Accordingly, a check for Six Hundred Dollars (\$600.00) in satisfaction of the additional independent claim fees is attached hereto.

Conclusion

Inasmuch as Applicants have traversed the contentions of the Examiner in a diligent effort to place the application in condition for allowance Applicants respectfully request the issuance of a Notice Of Allowance for claims 6, 8-15, 20, 30, 31, 35, 43, 45-52, 65, 66, and 70, at the earliest possible time. Applicants further respectfully request the courtesy of a telephone call should there be any outstanding issues related to the issuance of a Notice of Allowance in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. H. Pierce', written over a horizontal line.

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